



# MONGOLIA SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

## AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: May 07, 2026 - May 14, 2026

This report was produced using open-source intelligence analysis. The assessment is grounded in publicly available reporting and should be cross-referenced with primary sources. RSS feed articles are listed in the annex for reference.

---

## Executive Summary

Mongolia's security landscape from May 07 to May 14, 2026, was characterized by ongoing efforts to strengthen cybersecurity and active diplomatic engagements, alongside preparations for future military exercises. A significant development was the continued reporting on a China-aligned Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) group, "GopherWhisper," actively targeting Mongolian government institutions, highlighting persistent cyber espionage threats. Diplomatic activities included a visit by the UN Human Rights Chief, praising Mongolia's human rights progress, and ongoing discussions with the United States to deepen their strategic "third neighbor" partnership. Upcoming joint military exercises with China and recent reports on past drills with India and the trilateral border exercise with China and Russia underscore Mongolia's complex security balancing act between its two large neighbors and its "third neighbor" policy. The nation continues to grapple with internal cybersecurity vulnerabilities despite a robust legal framework.

## Key Security Developments

- Cyber Espionage Targeting Government Institutions

A China-aligned Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) group, dubbed "GopherWhisper," has been actively targeting Mongolian government institutions since at least November 2023, with reports detailing its activities emerging in late April 2026. The group utilizes various legitimate cloud services, including Microsoft Outlook, Slack, Discord, and file.io, for command and control (C2) and data exfiltration. ESET researchers identified at least 12 infected systems within one Mongolian government entity, with indications of dozens more potential victims. This ongoing cyber espionage campaign underscores the persistent and sophisticated threats faced by Mongolia's digital infrastructure from state-backed actors.

- Cybersecurity Framework and Compliance Challenges

A report published on May 8, 2026, highlighted Mongolia's established legal and regulatory foundation for cybersecurity, including a 2021 cybersecurity law, national Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs), and a coordinating council. However, the report noted critically low compliance rates among obliged organizations in 2025 and varying audit quality. This indicates a significant gap between policy and practical implementation, leaving Mongolian systems vulnerable despite legislative efforts.

- UN Human Rights Chief's Visit and Corruption Concerns

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk visited Ulaanbaatar on May 10, 2026, where he commended Mongolia's progress in human rights, particularly its adoption of the region's first law protecting human rights defenders. However, Türk also raised concerns about corruption, noting that civil society representatives identified it as the "biggest bottleneck" to the country's development. This highlights internal governance challenges that can indirectly impact national security and stability.

- Upcoming Joint Military Exercise with China: "Steppe Partnership 2026"

Mongolia and China are preparing for joint military exercises, "Steppe Partnership 2026," scheduled to take place on Chinese territory from May 26 to June 10, 2026. These exercises will involve ground maneuvers with live fire, aiming to deepen strategic trust, enhance practical interaction, and contribute to regional stability and peace. This demonstrates ongoing military cooperation and strategic alignment between Mongolia and its southern neighbor.

- Recent Reporting on India-Mongolia "Nomadic Elephant 2025" Exercise

Recent reports, including one on May 13, 2026, referenced the 17th edition of the joint military exercise "Nomadic Elephant 2025" between India and Mongolia, which was conducted at the Special Forces Training Centre in Ulaanbaatar from May 31 to June 13, 2025. The exercise focused on non-conventional operations in semi-urban and mountainous terrain under a United Nations mandate, with a strong emphasis on counter-terrorism operations and precision sniping. This highlights Mongolia's continued engagement with its "third neighbor" India in defense cooperation and peacekeeping capabilities.

- Recent Reporting on China-Russia-Mongolia "Border Defence Cooperation - 2025" Drills

News updated on May 7, 2026, discussed the first-ever joint border defense drills, "Border Defence Cooperation - 2025," held by China, Russia, and Mongolia in September 2025 in an unidentified border region. These drills aimed to enhance strategic cooperation, strengthen the ability to deal with border security threats, and consolidate strategic mutual trust. This signifies a deepening of security coordination among the three neighbors, particularly concerning border management and counter-terrorism.

- Mongolia-U.S. Strategic Partnership Discussions

In March 2026, discussions between Mongolia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Development Enkhbayar Jadamba and U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia Richard Buangan focused on enriching their "strategic third neighbor" partnership, ahead of the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2027. The talks covered economic content and cooperation in various sectors, including civil aviation,

renewable energy, critical minerals, and artificial intelligence. This underscores Mongolia's ongoing efforts to diversify its international partnerships beyond its immediate neighbors.

- U.S. Policy on Inner Mongolia

The United States National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2026, signed into law on December 18, 2025, includes a provision for establishing an Inner Mongolia Section within the U.S. Mission in China. This section is authorized to monitor political, economic, and social developments in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. While directly concerning Chinese territory, this U.S. policy reflects a growing international awareness of issues affecting ethnic Mongolians and could have indirect implications for Mongolia's diplomatic considerations.

- Russian Foreign Policy Priority on Mongolia

Remarks by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on May 8, 2026, reiterated Russia's view of relations with Mongolia as a priority and a key strategic partner. This highlights the continued importance of the bilateral relationship for Russia, emphasizing multifaceted cooperation based on historical ties and shared regional perspectives.

- Intelligence Personnel Development

The General Intelligence Department of Mongolia's website indicated ongoing efforts in intelligence personnel development, with announcements such as "YEAR OF YOUNG OFFICERS' DEVELOPMENT 2026" on April 20, 2026, and "ADMISSION TO THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE UNIVERSITY IS ONGOING!" on April 14, 2026. These initiatives suggest a focus on enhancing the capabilities and professionalization of Mongolia's intelligence services.

## Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Mongolia's recent security developments underscore its delicate balancing act within a complex geopolitical environment, primarily influenced by its two powerful neighbors, China and Russia, and its "third neighbor" policy, which includes the United States, India, and other democratic nations. The upcoming "Steppe Partnership 2026" exercises with China and the recent reporting on the "Border Defence Cooperation – 2025" drills with China and Russia demonstrate a continued emphasis on security cooperation with its immediate neighbors. This engagement is crucial for maintaining regional stability and managing shared border security concerns, particularly in countering terrorism and sabotage. However, these closer ties with Beijing and Moscow also highlight Mongolia's strategic reliance on these powers.

The persistent cyber espionage activities by China-aligned APT groups targeting Mongolian government institutions introduce a significant layer of complexity to these relationships. While military and diplomatic ties are maintained, the cyber domain reveals underlying tensions and strategic competition for intelligence and influence. This necessitates a robust and independent cybersecurity posture for Mongolia, which, as recent reports indicate, is still a work in progress despite a strong legal framework. The "third neighbor" policy, exemplified by ongoing discussions with the U.S. to deepen their strategic partnership, serves as a crucial counterweight, allowing Mongolia to diversify its security and economic ties and avoid over-reliance on any single power.

The renewed interest in the "Power of Siberia 2" pipeline project, which would traverse Mongolia, presents both potential economic opportunities and significant geopolitical risks. Concerns about increased dependence on Russia for energy supply and potential threats to Mongolia's sovereignty due to the pipeline's extraterritorial nature highlight the challenges of navigating major power infrastructure projects. Furthermore, the U.S. NDAA provision concerning Inner Mongolia, while not directly about sovereign Mongolia, reflects a broader geopolitical interest in the region's ethnic dynamics and human rights, which could indirectly influence Mongolia's diplomatic considerations with China. Overall, Mongolia's recent activities reflect a pragmatic approach to foreign policy, seeking to leverage its unique geographic position to foster cooperation while safeguarding its national interests amidst competing regional influences.

## Military and Defense Analysis

Mongolia's military and defense posture during this period reflects a continued focus on enhancing interoperability, peacekeeping capabilities, and border security through international cooperation. The recent reporting on the "Nomadic Elephant 2025" joint military exercise with India, which concentrated on non-conventional operations and counter-terrorism in challenging terrains, underscores Mongolia's commitment to modernizing its forces for contemporary security challenges and its role in UN peacekeeping operations. This aligns with the long-standing defense cooperation with the U.S., which has significantly contributed to strengthening the Mongolian Armed Forces' peacekeeping capabilities and promoting democratic civilian control.

The upcoming "Steppe Partnership 2026" exercises with China, involving ground maneuvers and live fire, indicate a sustained effort to deepen strategic trust and practical interaction with its largest neighbor. Similarly, the "Border Defence Cooperation - 2025" drills with China and Russia highlight a coordinated approach to addressing shared border security threats, including terrorism and sabotage. These exercises are vital for maintaining readiness and fostering regional security

cooperation. While specific defense spending trends or new defense acquisitions were not prominently reported within this timeframe, the emphasis on joint exercises and personnel development, as seen in the General Intelligence Department's initiatives for young officers, suggests an ongoing investment in human capital and operational readiness. Mongolia's defense strategy appears to be geared towards maintaining a professional, adaptable force capable of contributing to regional stability and international peacekeeping, while carefully balancing its relationships with major global and regional powers.

## Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Mongolia will likely continue its active engagement in multilateral and bilateral military exercises. The "Steppe Partnership 2026" with China, scheduled from May 26 to June 10, 2026, will be a key event, showcasing ongoing defense cooperation with its southern neighbor. Concurrently, Mongolia will likely intensify efforts to address its cybersecurity vulnerabilities, particularly in light of the persistent "GopherWhisper" APT attacks. Expect increased focus on closing compliance gaps and investing in cybersecurity professionals, as highlighted in recent reports. Diplomatically, Mongolia will maintain its "third neighbor" policy, with continued discussions with partners like the U.S. to broaden economic and security cooperation. Internal discussions on human rights and anti-corruption measures, spurred by the UN Human Rights Chief's visit, may also see short-term policy responses.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The primary risk area remains cybersecurity, with the ongoing threat of sophisticated state-sponsored cyber espionage from both China and Russia. The low compliance rates in domestic cybersecurity frameworks present a significant vulnerability that could lead to further data breaches and compromise of critical government systems. Geopolitically, the potential advancement of the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline through Mongolia could become a flashpoint, raising concerns about increased dependence on Russia and potential sovereignty issues. While civil unrest is generally low-threat, internal issues like corruption, as noted by the UN Human Rights Chief, could lead to public dissatisfaction if not adequately addressed. Border security, despite joint drills, remains a constant concern given Mongolia's vast and porous borders, which authorities monitor for transnational threats.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the progress and outcomes of the "Steppe Partnership 2026" exercises, which will signal the depth of military cooperation with China. Developments in Mongolia's cybersecurity posture, particularly any new initiatives to improve compliance and develop skilled professionals, will be crucial. Statements or actions regarding the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline will indicate shifts in Mongolia's energy and geopolitical alignment. Further,

any high-level diplomatic engagements with "third neighbors" or developments related to the U.S. Inner Mongolia policy could signal evolving geopolitical dynamics. Lastly, the government's response to corruption concerns and any related policy reforms will be important for internal stability.

Strategic recommendations: Mongolia should prioritize a rapid and comprehensive overhaul of its cybersecurity implementation, moving beyond legal frameworks to ensure high compliance rates and invest heavily in training and retaining cybersecurity professionals. Diversifying cybersecurity partnerships beyond its immediate neighbors could also enhance resilience. Diplomatically, Mongolia should continue to actively pursue its "third neighbor" policy, strengthening ties with a broader range of democratic partners to balance the influence of China and Russia. Regarding the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline, Mongolia should negotiate robust safeguards to protect its sovereignty and ensure tangible economic benefits, avoiding undue dependence. Internally, sustained and transparent efforts to combat corruption are essential to bolster public trust and national stability. Finally, Mongolia should continue to leverage its role in international peacekeeping and regional security dialogues, such as the Ulaanbaatar Security Dialogues, to enhance its international standing and promote its neutral foreign policy.

## Structured Assessment

```
```\njson\n{\n  "threat_level": "Elevated",\n  "hotspots": [\n    {\n      "label": "Ulaanbaatar",\n      "detail": "Ongoing cybersecurity threats targeting government institutions, diplomatic engagements, and military training activities.",\n      "lat": 47.9188,\n      "lng": 106.9175,\n      "intensity": 3\n    },\n    {\n      "label": "Mongolia-China Border Region",
```

"detail": "Site of past joint border defense exercises and upcoming 'Steppe Partnership 2026' military drills, as well as concerns regarding the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline.",

"lat": 43.46,

"lng": 111.95,

"intensity": 3

},

{

"label": "Mongolia-Russia Border Region",

"detail": "Site of past joint border defense exercises and potential route for the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline, indicating ongoing security cooperation and economic considerations.",

"lat": 50.24,

"lng": 106.48,

"intensity": 2

},

{

"label": "Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (China)",

"detail": "Focus of a new U.S. NDAA provision to monitor political, economic, and social developments, indirectly impacting Mongolia's regional diplomatic considerations.",

"lat": 40.8175,

"lng": 111.6738,

"intensity": 2

},

{

"label": "Chinese Territory (Steppe Partnership 2026)",

"detail": "Location for the upcoming joint military exercises between Mongolia and China, scheduled for May 26 - June 10, 2026, involving ground maneuvers with live fire.",

"lat": 41.80,

"lng": 113.00,

```
"intensity": 3
```

```
}
```

```
]
```

```
}
```

```
...
```